

Team evaluates nursing instruction at KSU

University hoping to win accreditation of its bachelor of science program started in 2003

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Now the waiting begins.

For the past three days, representatives from the National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission Site Visitors evaluated Kentucky State University's School of Nursing to decide whether it meets the seven criteria necessary to accredit its 3-year-old bachelor of science nursing program.

The visiting evaluators came Tuesday and leave today. They interviewed

former students, current students, staff, attended classes, visited students at their clinicals, spoke with professionals in the area, reviewed student papers, compared online promotional material to printed material to make sure they were consistent and accurate and tried to get a handle on the course content and curriculum design.

They also held a public forum Wednesday to discuss the program and explain the next steps in the accreditation process.

If the school meets all of the stan-

dards, it will receive a five-year accreditation for the new nursing program. If the school misses even one of the standards, the visiting evaluation team will recommend denial of accreditation, said Mary Lou Rusin, team leader for the NLNAC program evaluation team and chair of the Daemon College nursing department.

Standards include whether the school has a clear and appropriate publicly stated mission, qualified and credentialed faculty, a teaching and learning environment conducive to student success, an appropriate curriculum that prepares stu-

dents for the nursing profession, adequate resources for learning, integrity – which is evident in the nursing practices and relationships with students and an internal evaluation plan to ensure it is meeting students' needs.

The team will tell KSU nursing officials its recommendation today.

From there, an evaluation review panel of 20 nurse educators for various institutions will review and discuss the evaluators' report, Rusin said. They will decide whether to affirm the onsite team's recommendation. **See NURSING, A8**

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ommendation or overturn it.

That process takes place in June in San Diego and is a way to ensure all schools were treated

equitably in their reviews, Rusin said.

In July, the National League of Nursing Accreditation Com-

mission will review the prior two recommendations – another safeguard to ensure the process is fair and equitable – and make a final decision, Rusin said.

The school will be notified within two weeks of the commission's decision, Rusin said.

"The process is a long and arduous one, but this is probably

the most stressful part," Rusin said.

Academic Affairs Vice President Juanita Fleming said she appreciated Rusin and her team's visit.

"We are excited to hear your report, but whatever it says, we always want to do better," Fleming said. "We always want to be efficient, effective and excellent – the three 'e's'. We care about putting out a quality product."

Rusin said her team was "astounded" by the recent students' pass rates on the state board exams. In 2004 and 2005, the nursing classes had a 100 percent pass rate on the state boards.

While she said she had no further questions for the nursing administration, she asked if there was anything her team should know before preparing the report.

Former nursing school chair Patsy Turner came to the hearing Wednesday and told Rusin the school began planning for the bachelor's program long before it

came about. She said the school wanted to accommodate the needs of associate's degree program graduates and nurses in the community.

KSU opened its School of Nursing with an associate's degree program in 1967 and added the bachelor's degree curriculum in 2003.

From her interviews, Rusin said she came away with the feeling that students appreciated the small setting and student-centered focus of the KSU nursing program.

"They really found this to be a place that recognizes their uniqueness as adult learners and removed the barriers for students rather than putting them up," Rusin said. "That is the best thing a school can do."

Rusin also praised KSU President Mary Evans Sias, whom she called a "lightning rod for change."

"She knows a lot about the day-to-day operations for the nurs-

ing school, but still is so future-minded. She is such a visionary. She is fighting right now for more state money for a new nursing building."

Turner also said she wanted the team to know how cohesive the faculty members are.

"They are sincere, they work hard and they always think of the students first," Turner said. "They go far beyond what they need to do to help the students."

Several students attested to that fact, Rusin said. She said graduates and current students cited professor Catherine Cooke, who they said had the physical education requirement waived for a student who is also in the military and found another student an online summer course so she could move ahead in her studies.

"The students have been very complimentary and supportive of the faculty," Rusin said.